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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 001013

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [AG](#) [SOFA](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RAISES EXERCISE-SPECIFIC SOFA WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER BEDJAOUI FOR FLINTLOCK '05

REF: STATE 85939

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

1. (C) During Ambassador's May 21 call on newly appointed Foreign Minister Mohammed Bedjaoui (other issues reported septel), Ambassador noted the June 6-18 Flintlock '05 special forces exercise, adding that the exercise would provide an opportunity to advance counterterrorism capabilities in the Trans-Saharan region. Ambassador reviewed refTel talking points and other background on the Flintlock exercise, underscoring the importance of SOFA protections and confirming that while we would welcome a general SOFA agreement, we were now proposing only a SOFA for the June Flintlock exercise. Ambassador gave Bedjaoui a copy of our proposed draft exchange of notes based on the exercise SOFA. Ambassador observed that the U.S. routinely exchanges such notes with many countries, even Russia, and that the proposed texts contained standard language. SOFAs are necessary for us because they set the terms for the deployment of U.S. troops on other countries' soil and the legal protections they provide for our troops.

2. (C) Bedjaoui, a former Minister of Justice and Supreme Court justice, said that MOD Secretary General Senhadji had briefed him on Senhadji's recent visit to Washington (for the inaugural meeting of the Joint Military Dialogue), including the U.S. desire to conclude an exercise SOFA. After confirming that our proposed draft would only pertain to the Flintlock '05 exercise, Bedjaoui mused that one way to handle such a short-fuse issue might be to consider the U.S. troops participating in the exercise as attaches to the U.S. Embassy "if they are not too numerous." (Note: there are less than a dozen U.S. special forces expected for the Algerian portion of the exercise.) Ambassador said that the proposed exchange of notes would essentially have the effect of extending Vienna-like protections for technical and administrative personnel to U.S. military personnel participating in the exercise. Bedjaoui said he had heard that his predecessor, Abdelaziz Belkhadem, had discussed a similar proposal by former Ambassador Sanderson, but in the end the exercise did not take place. Bedjaoui concluded that he would review the draft carefully and "positively" and get back to Ambassador.

3. (C) Comment: Bedjaoui appeared favorably disposed toward the idea of an exercise-specific SOFA. During the earlier portion of the conversation, he told Ambassador that he was "delighted" to see the excellent relations that now exist between Algeria and the U.S. He also recalled positive memories from his childhood of U.S. servicemen landing in Algeria as part of the preparations for the Allied effort to invade Italy.

ERDMAN